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New legislation to combat invasive-plant species

LANSING – Michigan would be better protected against invasive plant species such as Eurasian milfoil and hydrilla under legislation introduced this week in the Michigan Senate, Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, announced.

“Anyone who has spent time walking through Michigan’s natural areas has seen the destruction these plants have caused,” Hardiman said. “We have to protect our lakes and streams as well as our state’s indigenous species from these invaders.”

Senate Bills 1420-1427 would regulate the sale and possession of certain non-native plants that pose a threat to habitats in Michigan. The legislation is similar to prohibitions put in place earlier this year to protect Michigan’s waterways from invasion by non-native fish species.

Foreign plant species such as purple loosestrife choke off streams and prevent native plants from growing, ecologists say.

The package also would establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council to establish criteria for identifying infested waterways and make recommendations regarding the state’s efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

“Already state leaders have targeted invasive animal species like the zebra mussel, but now we have to examine how we should address their plant counterparts,” Hardiman said.

The Great Lakes Conservation Task Force Report, issued in 2002, made broad recommendations for important steps that the state should take to protect our water quality. One of the most important recommendations was to implement laws that will guard against further invasion of both non native fish and plants.

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